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PEACE WITHOUT SOCIAL EQUALITY.

Letter on the Race Question by Wm. T. Vernon A. M., D. D.,
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Mail and Breeze:

Our request for a letter setting forth my views upon the race question is complied with without delay since you are so broad and liberal that I am confident that whatever I may say will be considered for just what it is worth—no more, no less.

I trust to be free from any bias that ordinarily would influence one directly concerned, and to discuss your propositions and answer queries as one seeing from the standpoint of an American rather than as a negro pure and simple.

To begin with, I think there is quite too much discussion of the negro, both by the "yellow journals" (white) and "yellow journals" (colored). Both have a tendency to focus too much attention upon him thus causing him in the every day affairs of life to be a marked man.

By this means the good self-respecting negro is coming to be the unexpected creature, unaccounted for, and the bad negro to be the thing expected—the type considered worthy of restraint only as the wild beast or, at least, not as are other criminals restrained and punished.

You ask me, "Is the negro treated unjustly?" To this I submit that we must first denominate what we consider to be just treatment.

I am sure that the average man would consider fair treatment in the main to be the right to work unhampered and unmolested, to have comfortable fare in places of travel and public, to have political liberty, the protection of law and the right of trial by jury of his peers when charged with crime or misdemeanor.

With such sentiments as are set forth by the Declaration of Independence and embodied in the Constitution of the United States as our national criterion, the above enumerated sentiments are necessarily true.

If any man or set of men are denied these, according to American standards, they are treated unjustly.

What the Negro May Complain of.

For me to say that the respectable, the best negroes are often to suffer inconvenience and hardship, to accept the most menial employment at the most meager wages, when ambitious and competent to do other work, for no other reason than they are negroes, is a statement in support of which I can produce abundant evidence.

This I have seen time and again. We have in many sections organizations which refuse to accept the negro as a member, and yet strike when he is employed to work with them, giving as a reason that he is a member of such organization. This seems to me to be extremely hard when we consider that negro laborer's love for his wife and children is as but the love of any other for his family—the ones for

whom death is sweet if by the same they live in happiness and security. This I would call unjust treatment.

As to the matter of comfort in places of travel, quite often are negroes made to feel positive discomfort, being compelled to go hungry with money in their pockets when no one will sell to them. They are made to travel in second class coaches and "Jim Crow" cars, after paying the same fare as other passengers.

The negro who must thus escort or send his female relatives from one locality to another will hardly feel that such treatment is just.

Again, the disfranchisement of the negro is becoming so general that there seems in many sections, not southern, a disposition to acquiesce in the same.

I am quite sure that in America we all are convinced that every citizen should have a "free ballot and a fair count," and any other system is unjust, tyrannical and revolutionary.

I would not for once say that irresponsible men should vote simply because they are of age, but I do believe that if property or educational qualifications are to be in vogue, they should apply to the white man and negro alike.

In such a country as ours, where the people are sovereigns, the ballot should be held sacred and is the means of protection for any constituency. Deprived of this the regnancy of justice is a hollow mockery and free government a myth.

Again, even where there remains the right to vote, we sometimes have ambitions to hold office. For what can we expect or hope? I fear not much in the way of offices of public trust.

No man who does not feel as we only can feel, realizing how high our ambition soars, and how low must remain our estate, can appreciate the feeling of some negroes who have predilections towards politics and statesmanship and yet must forever eschew the same because of this condition. Personally, it is my opinion that the negro's earlier belief that politics constituted the *sine qua non* of his life's mission was baneful. His real conception of true citizenship should be the securing of education and real property, becoming a tax payer, the formation of noble character and the participation in politics, as does every patriotic citizen, as a matter of civic duty—to assist in the securing of the purity and prosperity of the state and the happiness of all the people.

But to day the greatest of all sufferings of the negro's portion is the fact that in many localities he is almost without protection of law or guarantee of life. To be simply accused of a crime now often means that his life is in jeopardy. Lynchings for that foulest of all crimes, outrage, have graduated into burn-

ings and inhuman torture, and now the innocent negro is at times terrorized, driven from home and sometimes mobbed because of his brother negro's crime. Witness the Joplin mob, the Evansville and Danville mobs and many others.

Achievements of the Freedman.

He pays taxes on over \$600,000,000 worth of realty holdings, exclusive of church and school property all amassed by hard labor and not very remunerative wages, since his emancipation.

He has produced some statesmen, such as Douglass, Bruce, Elliott, and White; orators, such as Price, Bowen, Mason and Derrick; educators, such as Payne, Mitchell, and the apostle of industrialism, Booker T. Washington.

Negro boys have carried off honors at Cornell, Brown, Yale and Harvard.

Flora Batson, the song bird; Dubois, the scholar; Taylor, the musician; Ira Aldridge, the tragedian; Embury, the theologian, are ours.

Tanner has painted, Dunbar has tuned his lyre and, touched by the muse, broken forth in song that dies no more.

These are the giants, the ones who have arisen to noble heights and contributed to the sum total of America's great achievements.

There are still millions who despite ignorance and poverty, toil on, trust God and live honest lives and in humble homes do the best they can or know.

There are negro women by the thousands who toil over the wash-tub and the ironing board and still live true to home and love—whose every effort is for the weal and better life of their children.

There are hundreds of thousands of negro youth educated and refined who seek employment of the higher kind and, failing to secure the same, accept any honorable toil, however menial, and cheerfully struggle and hope for better things.

I admit that many are in idleness and drift into crime; but oftentimes they have been educated along the aesthetic lines and are barred from all employment tending toward or encouraging the same.

Idleness ensues, and this means crime.

We notice negro criminality more because we are beginning to expect more of him than his few years of freedom and untoward environment would warrant.

However, I would not thus excuse the negro loafer. I would



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have him learn the lessons of all races—particularly the great Anglo-Saxon race—to work at whatever his hands find to do, to save a portion of what he earns, however little, to rise from the lowly estate to a place of command. The negro of respectability must not condone the offenses or approve the idleness of the negro loafer and criminal, since we are all to be elevated in the eyes of the world only by an improvement of the criminal class as well as others. Being farthest behind in life's race, we must work more zealously to lift as we climb.

These ills upon the nation are but the result of slavery and must be for a time borne; and thus will toil and patience on the part of all true Americans make better the situation now calling for calm thought and pure motives everywhere.

Why There Will be no Race War.

To conceive of the civilized world standing by in this age while 10,000,000 of human beings are fought, conquered and slaughtered by 70,000,000 is a distorted mental picture not possible while conscience and reason live.

To feel that the American white man would force the same is to doubt his sanity and Christianity, and to feel that the negro is reckless enough to bring on the same is to think him a mad man. In such a struggle the negro might finally be destroyed, but the courage displayed by both races in all American wars would, inspired by the desperation of such a conflict, lead to horrors worse than the French Revolution, inviting the demolition of our governmental fabric.

I am for peace. I want no war or strife. Some predict war. Despite predictions to the contrary, this cannot be. No, unless God be

dead and Christ a myth forevermore.

As to your next query, may I say I believe it possible to effect a better understanding between the races.

I cannot bring myself to that degree of pessimism that doubts the final triumph of right and justice. The laws of the land provide for the same, the economy of Divine creation demands it.

A better era will come.

I have always found the best white men in sympathy with negroes striving for the right.

The better elements in both races have no quarrel. Our serious race troubles are usually begun by the more radical and oft-times vicious of both races.

These sooner or later enlist the sympathies of the better classes.

The sanest thought of the age is for a better understanding. This will come by the pursuance of the proper course on the part of the leaders.

Let the white minister preach charity, righteousness and the true Christianity, at the same time condemning without stint sin and violence, whether on the part of the law breaker or the mob.

Let the negro minister preach the same Christianity and love, take the same stand against criminals and mobs, and foster morality and education among his people.

Let him teach the negro that brains, character and property are today the greatest need. Let him preach that, since we are on trial, we must all the more struggle to rise.

Let all the race be as quick to have a negro criminal punished, according to law, as we are any of the American people, and thus refute the charge that we uphold criminals and maintain a lower standard of morals than other races.

More Negro Farmers the Need.

The negro needs more farmers and fewer loafers, more money and less poverty, more true manhood and less veneer and sham, more doctors and fewer quacks, more competent school teachers and fewer wage-drawing school keepers. In short, he must approach man's highest standard and the demands of God everywhere.

Then let the whites who would settle the question aright keep radical negro haters away from Chattanooga, where the best means of settling the race question are being discussed. Let them cease to give wide publicity to the sayings of unreasonable orators (who will not see any thing good in us), whose high official position enables them to add fuel to flames already consuming our national traditions and principles sacredly consecrated by the blood of patriots of both races since Knox was martyred at Bunker Hill or the negro, Attucks, fell on Boston Common. This will all bring about the only solution consistent with reason and our present civilization.

Lastly, I aver that the races are to continue to exist side by side as American citizens, emigration being impossible.

The Jamestown settlers came to America in 1607, the negroes in 1619, the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620. Side by side, though as master and slave, they have worked, suffered, fought and died. In peace the negro has been faithful and helped to tunnel mountains, dike seas, construct railroads, delve in the mines, cultivate the soil and make his brawn and sweat a part of our country's fabric.

Not a Falterer in the Time of War.

In war he has never faltered, as will the battles of Croton river in the Revolutionary War, New Orleans in the War of 1812, and the brave blacks of Fort Wagner, Olustee and Mines of St. Peters-

burg, and many other sanguinary fields of the Civil war attest. And the Cuban soil, where sleep the brave heroes of the Ninth and Tenth regulars; the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth (See President Roosevelt's tribute), is "hallowed" with the ashes of negro ex-slaves and their children, all saying to America that the strong black arm and brave heart of 10,000,000 of her citizens will be given gladly for her sake.

Why cannot such people remain here in peace and security?

These plead, entreat us not to leave these hills and ivy mantled cliffs, made by nature towers and citadels to human liberty and freedom. We cannot gather the drops of blood drawn from our bodies by sword and lash and carry them with us. We cannot gather the tears and groans of near three centuries and the bleached bones of our loved ones in cane brake and cotton patch, or on battle field, left there for all these years. These we would want with us as a memorial.

Peace Without Social Equality.

The best white men are going to help him to help himself as has been the case for generations.

I am convinced that by the adoption of the right methods, the two races will exist side by side peacefully without social equality, but as Americans, respecting each other and working for, fighting for and, as ever in the past when called upon, dying for this country of ours—America, the asylum of the oppressed, the gift of the All-Father to the down-trodden of earth.

Trusting you will pardon this too lengthy letter, frankly written I am your humble servant.



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Prof. J. Silone Yates stands as one of the leading negro women in the United States. She was reared in historic New England and received her grammar education in the schools of New York and was the first woman of color to receive a certificate entitling her to teach in the public schools of Newport, Rhode Island. She graduated from the Rogers High school of Newport. As valedictorian of her class, receiving the scholarship medal and was the only colored pupil in the class. Two years later she was graduated with honors, from the Rhode Island State Normal school with high honors. Since that time she has devoted her entire life to the work of educating and elevating her race. Besides her work in the school room, Mrs. Yates has done much in the organization known as the national association of colored women. She being its present president. For a period of eight years beginning in 1881, Mrs. Yates held the chair of natural science in Lincoln Institute, with perfect satisfaction to all concerned and was recalled there to take the chair of pedagogy in 1902. Mrs. Yates is a writer of national repute, having contributed articles to some of the best magazines in the country. Her connection with Lincoln Institute adds much to the strength of the faculty there as well as being a source of great inspiration for the many young ladies with whom she comes in daily contact.



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